

Rt Hon Julia Lopez MP
Minister of State for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure
Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Dyddiad | Date: 9 May 2022

Pwnc | Subject: **BFI Young Audiences Content Fund**

Dear Julia,

Thank you for your letter of 1 April 2022 addressing the Committee's comments on the licence fee settlement and attaching your response to the recommendations made on Ofcom's report '*Small Screen: Big Debate*'.

On 16 March 2022, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee ('the Committee') noted a letter from Caitriona Noonan, from Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture, about the closure of the BFI Young Audiences Content Fund. In her letter Dr Noonan writes:

'Over the course of this fund, records suggest investment went to support Welsh language content or Wales-based indies. For instance, in 2019, Person/a (Cwmni Da Cyf) and Y Gyfrinach (Boom Cymru TV) were both awarded investment.'

She also highlighted the importance of content for young audiences by referring to research on the children who participated in the BFI 'See Yourself on Screen Challenge, noting that the academics who spoke to the children:

'concluded that the role TV shows play in the lives of young audiences in the UK remains vital'.

I understand that the fund is being evaluated. In order to feed into this exercise, I have asked Welsh public service broadcasters (PSBs) and the organisation representing Welsh independent producers, TAC, to highlight some examples of the value of the fund, and of continuing it.

The comments from ITV Cymru Wales are typical of the responses highlighting the impact of the fund. Phil Henfrey, Head of News and Programmes, writes:

'... the YACF has been critical in reversing the reduction in investment in PSB children's content nationally, increasing plurality, upping the quality and ambition of children's content with the associated cultural benefits for Wales, and at the same providing significant economic growth to the sector in Wales.'

Siân Doyle, Chief Executive of S4C, writes:

'One of the key elements of importance to Wales is that at least 5% of the awards are for content in the UK's indigenous languages. The indigenous language guide has had a positive impact, has been a catalyst for Celtic co-productions and is an important driver for original content for children and the industry in Wales.'

Dyfrig Davies, Chair of the organisation representing independent producers in Wales, TAC, writes:

'The evidence shows that the Fund has opened up opportunities for companies to produce children's content for the first time, develop further series, enable the creation of digital content to attract young people to view, enable the funding of hard-to-fund programmes such as dramas for young people and create Welsh-language content that competes with SVoD services. It is no exaggeration to say that several high-quality programmes would not have been made had it not been for this Fund.'

In terms of the importance of continuing support for content for young children, Siân Doyle, Chief Executive of S4C, writes:

'S4C would be very supportive of any scheme or fund that would enable additional investment in cross-platform content for children and young people. As with any fund or scheme, we would also want to see the continuation of specific funding guarantees for content in Welsh and other indigenous languages.'

I would be grateful if you could consider these responses as part of the review of the Fund. I feel that the evidence of the impact of the fund on economic growth in the sector and enhancing the quality and availability of content for young audiences, shows there is value in continuing the fund. I would be grateful if you could keep me informed of the progress and outcomes of the review.

Finally, I am sorry that your schedule has not allowed you to join one of our meetings yet. I'm copying below the dates of our forthcoming meetings until the end of the year, and I very much hope that you are able to join us to discuss the challenges and opportunities for public service broadcasting on one of these dates:

- 8 June
- 23 June
- 6 July
- 15 July
- 15 September
- 21 September
- 6 October
- 19 October
- 2 November
- 10 November
- 17 November
- 23 November
- 30 November
- 8 December
- 15 December

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Delyth Jewell

Delyth Jewell MS

Chair

Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

